

Parent Handbook



Q&A ASSOCIATES 2013 • PO BOX 657 • 437 William Ave • Davis, WV 26260

Helping Young Adults Achieve Transition

Q&A Associates is a family of programs focused on working with young adults who have struggled to sustain a productive and positive transition into adulthood.

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Contact Us Page

Angie Shockley

Founder & CEO

ashockley@qa-associates.com

304 · 642 · 9070

Keith Bishop

Director of Operations

bishop.keith@gmail.com

304 · 704 · 9606

Sandy Schmiedeknecht, MA, CLC

Lead Life Coach & Transition Specialist

sandyschmiedeknecht@gmail.com

304 · 642 · 9047

Tammy Robbins

Parent Strategist

trobbsins@qa-associates.com

304-704-9125

Media



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<https://www.facebook.com/cabinmountianliving>

Introduction

Welcome to Q&A Associates! We are happy to have you and your son or daughter participating in our programming. Q&A Associates is a family of programs providing transitional living experiences for young adults who are moving into independence, but need some assistance and guidance along the way. We have three programs in Canaan Valley, WV: The Journey WV for Young Men, Applewood Transitions for Young Women, and Cabin Mountain Living Center.

The Journey WV and Applewood Transitions are gender specific programs providing formal life skills instruction as well as practical application in the communities of Tucker County, WV. Both programs also provide individual life coaching and 24/7 mentoring for our clients. We work with local therapists to continue individual therapy as appropriate for each client. We also provide medication management by either working with the home psychiatrist or establishing a relationship with our consulting psychiatrist.

Cabin Mountain Living Center was established to provide a safe and supportive living option for clients who may need a longer term option to gain independence or for clients who are always going to require some level of support, but can achieve semi-independence and a high quality of life. Clients of Cabin Mountain can either transition from Journey or Applewood, or they can enter Cabin Mountain after participating in other therapeutic environments.

What is Transitional Living?

Chances are, you have experienced a variety of therapeutic services and environments as you have journeyed with your son or daughter from childhood through adolescence and into young adulthood. Most of our clients have participated in a residential therapeutic setting such as wilderness, residential treatment program, or therapeutic boarding school. They are at least 17.5 years old and are moving toward independence. However, they are not ready to step out on their own and really need a more structured transition from adolescent to young adult.

Our programs are a training ground for our clients, a safe place to practice life skills with structure and support. This is truly the structured transition they need to be successful young adults. We create a supported living community to help our clients develop, explore and drive their passions. Our model is real life, plain and simple.

This is a great opportunity for our clients and parents to start moving forward in a new direction. Transitioning from adolescence to adulthood has its challenges for the family unit. Our programs provide the support to help both youth and parent(s) move from an adult/child to an adult/adult role. We work diligently with our clients to begin to advocate and take ownership of their lives. We also offer support to our parents to work on letting go and starting the next phase of their lives as parents of an adult.

How is Transitional Living different from other residential programs?

Our transitional living programs are designed to focus on the young adult client taking control of and responsibility for his or her life. These programs are going to be much different than adolescent residential programs in some key areas. First, we do not require parents to attend a parent workshop. Most parents have participated in multiple parent workshops, and we can see the benefits. However, our focus is on helping the client and family develop appropriate, adult relationships. Second, most adolescent therapeutic programs work hard to help the client and family develop a comprehensive plan for when the adolescent returns home. We facilitate plans for the young adult to move into his or her own life, and not "back" to the adolescent environment with mom and dad. We are in the business of "launching" young adults, which means helping them to develop the skills and aptitudes necessary to move into adult independence. The launching can take many forms and there really is no wrong way. Our programs are truly individualized and provide opportunities for clients to explore their options and find their passions. When they complete our program, our clients may go to college – community, technical or university; they may enter the workforce after learning a skill or trade during their time with us; they may live in their home area, but not in their parents' house. Many of our clients elect to stay in the Davis and Canaan Valley area where they have jobs and develop peer groups and relationships. This is a small, rural area with people who understand and support our program and the efforts of our clients. Many of our clients find that by living in our small town, they can better maintain their newly found independence until they become strong and practiced enough to move on. We continue to provide support and guidance to our local graduates as they need it. They are always part of our family!

What is the parent's role?

In the past few years, we have worked with many parents who have focused all of their time and energy on their at-risk child. For most, this has been a journey that began pre-kindergarten and has consumed them for years. Often, one parent has given up a career to accommodate the needs of their child. Some parents have relocated their families to provide better opportunities for an at-risk child. In most cases, parents have had to fight to ensure the safety and success of their child. While it is always a labor of love, it is exhausting and all-consuming. As your child enters our transitional living program, we are going to ask you to let go and allow your child to truly become a young adult. It is going to be difficult, and we completely understand and therefore provide coaching to help you move forward. However, the only way we can truly help your son or daughter to launch into independence is to help you allow it to happen.

For many years, you have made sure that your child was as safe and successful as possible. It is going to be difficult to step out of that role but critical. Even though your son or daughter may need more structure and assistance to become independent, it is still a natural process for a family as the young adult launches. All parents experience the "empty nest" to one degree or another. For you, it may be more significant because of the level of involvement and effort you have put into your child's growth. The fact is your son or daughter is going to continue to get older. No matter how hard we try, we can't stop Father Time! You are now the parents of a young adult. The good news is that you can begin to focus on YOUR life again. What are the interests and hobbies that may have fallen by the wayside? You now will have time to read a book or write a book! You will now have time to focus on your marriage or relationship that may have been put on the back burner. You can travel! Having an empty nest is tough, but it is natural, and it is an opportunity for both parents on many levels. We encourage you to begin thinking of yourself as an individual, not just as a parent.

How will communication be handled?

You will have a weekly call with your son or daughter that is facilitated by our life coach. There will also be a separate scheduled call with our parent strategist bi-weekly to give an update and to help support you on moving forward with your life. Other staff may be on the call as needed. The call is not set up to be a family therapy session. It is the first opportunity your son or daughter will have to begin developing an adult relationship with you. We work with the young adult to advocate and share in their experiences as they choose to report. Our coach works to move them from programmatic rhetoric to an adult/adult conversation. He or she will determine the agenda for each call. Initially, the calls will be mostly your son or daughter reporting on their activities and daily life. As the program progresses, you will notice that the weekly calls become more substantial as your young adult takes on more responsibilities and handles him or herself in a more adult way. It is very important that you allow the young adult to own the call. As parents it is crucial that you ask open-ended questions, avoid rescuing or problem solving, as these are areas of growth for the young adult to achieve.

Invariably, there are special situations, which require more communication between you and staff. This communication may take the form of email and/or phone calls. We will work in partnership with you to help facilitate the most effective programming for your son or daughter.

We are always available to discuss your concerns or answer questions. You will have the cell numbers and email addresses for our directors and life coaches.

What to do with regard to visits, holidays and special occasions?

Visits: We encourage our clients and their families to visit as often as is appropriate. As you may expect, we don't recommend home visits in the beginning as everyone is adjusting to the transition. However, as time goes on, visits are important to the overall progress and success of the program. We often recommend that parents and family members come to our area to visit with the client, rather than the client going home. This is less disruptive to the process of them moving forward into their own lives. In our life skills classes, our clients learn how to schedule trips, vacations, etc. We allow the client to take ownership of this process as this is another step toward an independent lifestyle.

Gainful employment is one of the many facets our clients experience. Just with every job, employees have schedules and we don't dictate their hours. In the process of teaching advocacy, if a client desires time off then it is up to he or she to work with their employer.

Holidays and Special Occasions: We celebrate holidays by hosting events and dinners that include our clients, their families, our staff and our families. We always have some clients who go home or to other locations with their families and we always have clients who stay with us for holidays. These decisions are made on an individual basis. Please know that we love having big holiday celebrations and enjoy having our clients and their families join us.

What happens day to day?

One of the most common questions parents ask us is, "Can you describe a typical day?" That is also one of the hardest questions to answer, not because we don't know, but because daily routines are developed by the individual client. We have a structure that includes some activities and routines that apply to all clients, but we require our clients to develop individualized growth plans, which means that the daily routine may differ from client to client. All clients participate in Life Skills Instructional sessions with a life coach. This usually consists of one day being spent in the office environment where the client will work in a small group and individually with a life coach to complete the life skills curriculum. All clients spend time each day attending to household chores. Each client is responsible for his or her personal space and belongings, including laundry. The group shares responsibilities for common areas in the house and the assigned chores rotate so everyone gets a chance to learn how to complete every chore. The clients cook together as a group and prepare three meals a day, which takes a chunk of time. Most of our clients enroll in some level of academic pursuit. We have clients completing high school requirements and we have clients who have enrolled in college or technical courses. Most of our clients get jobs soon after entering our program. Teaching them how to balance work, school and life is a big part of our programming.

Each Tuesday and Thursday night, all clients (males and females) participate in group and mindfulness activities. Tuesdays are dedicated to themed processing groups and include topics such as gratitude, nutrition and exercise, and personal growth. Tuesday groups can also be focused on a historical or cultural event that may culminate in an experiential activity such as a field trip. We are close enough to our Nation's Capital to enjoy the museums and landmarks that represent the development of our government and culture.

On Thursday evenings, the clients all attend classes on Mindfulness, led by a certified mindfulness instructor who is also a mentor for our clients. Most of our clients have had some level of mindfulness instruction when they join us, but we strive to help them not only understand the concept of mindfulness, but to learn how to practice mindfulness in their everyday lives. Staying present and focused on the moment is really tough for anyone to accomplish, and it is especially difficult for young adults. However, if they spend all of their time stuck in either the past or the future, they cannot benefit from the now! There are many adults who never learn the value of being present or how to practice mindfulness. We strive to help our clients learn this valuable skill so they can take full advantage of our programming - the life skills instruction and the practical application in their daily lives.

All clients can get a pass to our local resort Fitness Center, which includes an indoor pool, sauna and hot tub. We work hard to help our clients understand the importance of nutrition and physical fitness. In addition to the Fitness Center, we are surrounded by opportunities for outdoor activities such as skiing, snowboarding, hiking, boating, climbing, horseback riding, bike riding, fishing, etc. Our staff members exercise right along with our clients as we all strive for healthy bodies and minds! We encourage physical activity but do not mandate. Each client must decide and own their physical well-being.

We intentionally include down time in each client's daily schedule. For most of their lives, their down time has been scheduled and filled for them. They are often lost when they don't have something scheduled or someone telling them what they need to do. In fact, they will ask for directions or guidance rather than finding ways to enjoy down time. It is critical to their ongoing success that they find healthy ways to manage and fill their down time. We provide them opportunities to do this, which means we don't tell them what to do in every minute of every day. We watch them to see how they will react to down time. Some will try to disappear into an electronic device (more on that

later), some will try to sleep, or some will pick at a peer. However, in time and with practice, our clients take advantage of down time to work on a hobby like playing guitar, reading, writing, or crafting. We have clients who have turned their hobbies into businesses, such as making and selling jewelry or growing vegetables in raised beds and selling them at the local farmer's market. We encourage our clients to seek out enterpruenership opportunities! As we get into careers and have families, we often lose our personal time. Our culture doesn't embrace giving our children personal time, but rather scheduling our children from morning to night – school, lessons, sports, etc. When they become adults, they don't know how to self-manage because they have never HAD to. We make sure they understand what down time is and how to fill it in healthy and acceptable ways.

How do we handle money?

All of our clients learn financial management as part of their Life Skills Curriculum. They will open a bank account and learn how to balance their checking accounts, use a debit card, and manage a savings account. This is a great opportunity for clients to begin their process to financial independence. As they earn money, they will deposit it into a savings account. As they have wants and needs – and we teach them the difference – they will go to the bank and make withdrawals to cover their expenses. As you receive requests from your son or daughter for items or services, please check with us to be sure that he or she resources the request here before just “running to mom and dad” as they have done in the past. It is critical for them to begin to take financial responsibility if they are going to achieve independence.

Each week, clients receive a \$50.00 grocery allowance to purchase food and personal care items. As part of their Life Skills, they work together with their housemates to complete a food inventory, develop a menu for upcoming week, create a shopping list and then go shopping. Some weeks, all clients go together. Some weeks, a couple clients will go for the whole house. They have all learned how to pool their money to make their food budget stretch further. Please know that we do not allow our clients to go without critical items, but we do allow them to make decisions and experience the natural consequences of their decisions, both positive and negative. It’s all part of the learning process.

Typically, when they go shopping, they also make time for some type of fun activity such as going to the movies, bowling, shopping, etc., while they are in town.

How do we handle electronics and social media?

We live in a world of connectivity. We can manage entire businesses from a smart phone. We rekindle or develop friendships via social networking websites. According to the Washington Post, online dating sites generated 1.049 billion in revenue in 2011. Of the 54 million single people in the US, 40 million have tried online dating. The young adult generation of our country is going to live and work within this culture of connectivity. However, most of our clients struggle with self-regulation when it comes to electronics, and this is one of the most common concerns of parents who inquire about our program. The conundrum is this: How do we keep our clients from being lost in electronics but also prepare them for the world in which they will live and work? The answer is not in the electronics themselves. The answer is in self-regulation. Our society is teaching our young people to expect instant gratification. That is perhaps the most damaging side effect of living in a world of connectivity. We no longer learn patience or that the reward is worth the wait. We as parents did not grow up with a cell phone attached to us, nor did we have laptop computers or tablets that allowed us to have instant access to information, people, places and things. I remember being very excited each fall when the JC Penney catalog arrived in the mail. I would spend days pouring over the pages to determine what the current styles were and which ones I thought I could wear. Now, I watch my daughter utilize online shopping sites to locate a special occasion dress in about 10 minutes. Our generation – we parents of young adults – never struggled with self-regulation when it came to electronics and therefore, we don't know how to teach our kids that important skill. We give them cell phones at 10 or 13 because their friends have them and we want them to be able to call home. We buy them a laptop when they

enter middle or high school because it is a necessary part of their education process. We want them to be successful; we want them to fit in; we want them to excel in today's world. We never stop to think that by giving a child a smart phone or a laptop we are also giving them a front row seat to the world's stage.

The adolescent brain is in development until about the age of 26, which means that we are giving electronics to our children when they most susceptible to influence, positive and negative. Humans are curious by nature; that is how we learn! However, we are not born with a self-regulation button. That is something that must be taught. Managing electronics is simply part of the bigger picture of self-regulation. We must learn to regulate ourselves with food so we don't become obese; we must learn to regulate ourselves with relationships so we don't become co-dependent. We must learn to regulate ourselves with electronics so we don't become addicted to the reward of instant gratification.

Many of our clients come to us without cell phones or laptops because they have struggled with them in the past and either the previous program or the parents have taken the electronic devices away. We provide opportunities for these clients to use computers in a common location – the office – with supervision. Over a period of time, we will help them to learn self-regulation and patience, mostly through mindfulness techniques and practice. Some of our clients do have phones, laptops and/or tablets when they arrive. Our approach is to allow the clients to keep their electronic devices as long as they are able to self-regulate. If they are not able to self-regulate and the electronic devices become an issue, we will help our clients learn to manage themselves having the clients turn in their devices to staff for defined amounts of time during the day and night. Teaching self-regulation with electronics is a process and takes a great deal of time and practice, but it is one of the most important skills our clients learn during our programming.

Parent Reading List

AUTHOR	TITLE	INFORMATION
Hendrix, Harville	<u>Giving the Love that Heals</u>	Provides ways of communicating, understanding of adolescent development and exercises to clarify the origins of our parenting styles.
Glasser, William	<u>Parents and Teens, Dissolving the Barriers</u>	Dr. Glasser offers an approach based on "Choice Therapy" which can be used with confidence to maintain strong and loving relationships with today's teenagers.
	<u>Warning, Psychiatry May be Hazardous to your Health</u>	Dr. Glasser confronts many of the "myths" surrounding diagnosis and treatment, and is an advocate of mental health as opposed to mental illness.
Bradshaw, John	<u>The Family</u>	Bradshaw is well known for his acclaimed PBS series on family dynamics. Reading this book will illuminate the difference between healthy families and ones that create the breeding ground for problems.
Ruiz, Don Miguel	<u>The Four Agreements</u>	The Four Agreements is an inspirational book that examines self-limiting beliefs.
Cline, Foster	<u>Parenting Teens with Love and Logic: Preparing Adolescents for Responsible Adulthood</u>	Dr. Cline provides over 50 typical adolescent problems (substance abuse, curfew, dating) and walks parents through ways to handle them.
Katie, Byron	<u>Loving What Is</u>	An interesting way to determine whose problem it is, yours or your child's.
Pantley, Elizabeth	<u>Hidden Message</u>	What our children hears, as opposed to what we think they hear.
Pipher, Mary	<u>The Shelter of Each Other, Rebuilding our Families</u>	Explores the impact our culture has adolescents and offers suggestion to build stronger communities.
Coleman, J.	<u>When Parents Hurt</u>	Compassionate strategies when you and your grown child don't get along.

Clinton, Tim & Sibcy G	<u>Why You Do the Things You Do</u>	Four relationship styles shed light on why you do what you do and how you can learn to love and be loved better. Tools to steer away from negative patterns and break free of past mistakes creating new and satisfying connections with your spouse, child, close friend and God.
	<u>Loving Your Child Too Much</u>	Shower kids with love without overindulging, overprotecting or over controlling.
Covey, Stephen	<u>The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families</u>	Covey demonstrates how the principles he introduced in The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People can be used to build the kind of strong, loving family that last for generations.
Andrews, Andy	<u>The Noticer</u>	Sometimes, all a person needs is a little perspective. An insightful short-story.
Bottke, Allison	<u>Setting Boundaries with Your Adult Child</u>	Six steps to hope and healing for struggling parents. The simple acronym SANITY provides a memorable description of the six steps.
Campbell, Ross & Chapman, Gary	<u>How to Really Love your Adult Child</u>	Building healthy relationships in a changing world. Setting guidelines, helping when your adult child struggles and confronting differences.
Cloud, Townsend, Carder & Henslin	<u>Unlocking Your Family Patterns</u>	Combines biblical insights with counseling wisdom providing hope for healing relationships while understanding doing things differently and stopping the negative familial patterns.
Petersen, James	<u>Why Don't We Listen Better</u>	Communication and Connecting in Relationships through insight and tools for effective communication and improvement of relationships.
Seigel, Dan	<u>The Adolescent Brain</u>	Explores the neurobiology of the adolescent brain. Offers way of helping our youth to maximize their brain potential

